

Mildenhall photographic collection

The Mildenhall photographs document the early development of Australia's capital city, Canberra, from the 1920s to the 1930s. Controlled by the National Archives as series A3560, the collection comprises more than 7,700 images on glass negatives.

Jack Mildenhall – photographer

The photographs were taken by William James (Jack) Mildenhall (1891–1962), a Commonwealth public servant. Initially employed as paymaster in the Department of Works & Railways he became the Information Officer for the Federal Capital Commission in 1926.

Mildenhall had identified a need for an official photographer for the growing national capital in 1921. He offered his services to the Department of Works & Railways – an offer which was quickly accepted. Often working in his own time, and on an *ad hoc* basis alongside his full-time clerical position, Mildenhall continued in this role until 1935, when complaints concerning his monopolisation of departmental photography resulted in an inquiry that forced the arrangement to be discontinued.

Contents of the collection

The photographic collection includes images of the construction of buildings that have since become Canberra landmarks; official visits for special events, such as the opening of Parliament House; ceremonies and civic occasions; as well as the public life of the growing community.

You can [search the collection](#) for titles of the photographs, and in most cases view a digital image of the photograph. Some examples of captions relating to a number of aspects of early life in Canberra are listed in the table below.

Taking shape

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Burrinjuck Dam under construction using flying fox	1921	A3560, 429
Road works in progress in front of Parliament House	1926	A3560, 2804
Part of Sydney Building, Civic Centre, under construction	1927	A3560, 3635

<u>Commonwealth Avenue looking north, Albert Hall and Commonwealth Bridge from West Block Offices showing young trees</u>	1928	A3560, 4237
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Government buildings

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Kings Hall, Parliament House, under construction</u>	1925	A3560, 934
<u>East Block Parkes under construction</u>	1926	A3560, 33
<u>National Library, Kings Avenue, Barton</u>	1927	A3560, 7757

Visits

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Royal Visit, May 1927 – Presentation Regimental Colours by the Duke of York on the parade ground at Duntroon</u>	1927	A3560, 3015
<u>Prime Minister Rt Hon SM Bruce welcoming the Duke and Duchess of York, on the steps of Parliament House</u>	1927	A3560, 3085

Hearth and home

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Hotel Canberra from the air</u>	1926	A3560, 71
<u>A tent camp and gardens</u>	1926	A3560, 870
<u>Kurrajong Hotel, National Circuit, Parkes, under construction</u>	1926	A3560, 1682
<u>Home of Sir Robert Garran, 22 Mugga Way, Red Hill</u>	1929	A3560, 5314
<u>Interior of House of George Romano – Drawing Room</u>	1932	A3560, 6739

Recreation and sport

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Piper and dancers doing the Highland Fling at Highland gathering, Acton Racecourse</u>	1925	A3560, 6564
<u>Children's sports day at old Acton racecourse</u>	1927	A3560, 787
<u>Policeman, bus drivers and civilians on steps of Capitol Theatre, Manuka, for Empire Day celebrations</u>	1928	A3560, 4113
<u>Interior of Manuka Swimming Pool</u>	1933	A3560, 7161

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Telopea Park school opening ceremony 11 September 1923 by Sir Austin Chapman, Minister for Trade and Customs</u>	1923	A3560, 256
<u>Opening of Salvation Army Hall by Sir John Butters</u>	1929	A3560, 5691
<u>St Andrews Presbyterian Church with St Andrews House and the Beadles Cottage</u>	1935	A3560, 7243

Community services

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Motor ambulance van and driver</u>	1926	A3560, 17
<u>Ambulance van showing interior with model patient</u>	1926	A3560, 177
<u>Fire engine with crew</u>	1926	A3560, 936
<u>Operating theatre at Canberra Community Hospital</u>	1926	A3560, 1630

A duplicate set of 50 images from the Mildenhall collection (mainly images of Canberra in 1927 when the provisional Parliament House was opened) is held by the Archives as series [A3348](#). Additional glass negatives taken by Mildenhall, documenting the early stages of Canberra under construction, are held as series [A13848](#).

Improving captions for the Mildenhall collection

The captions (or titles) of many images in the Mildenhall collection have become lost over time. As a result the descriptive information we have about some of the images is inadequate or incomplete, and in some cases may be incorrect. If you have information to improve a caption, please contact:

National Reference Service
PO Box 4924
KINGSTON ACT 2604

Mildenhall's Canberra

Mildenhalls' Canberra is a joint project between the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and the National Archives, to use the Mildenhall collection to communicate the significance of Canberra's early development as the national capital. Visit the website to upload your own rephotograph, pinpoint locations and add comments.